1:Mc:Dowalth E-1 (1912-1914)/948
NBS Bellacoola MSS



opened out on to a wooden platform, which served as sidewalk and extended from one end of the settlement to the other. The outer side of this structure was always supported on piles; in fact, in many cases, the houses as well as the whole sidewalk were thus raised from the ground. This type of construction was necessitated by the sloping sites of the villages, but had the added advantage of being a protection against attack. The villages differed in size from insignificant settlements of three to four houses, to ones with twenty or thirty, each containing several families. The ease with which the red cedar could be split and worked into large planks made possible the construction of these large, rectangular houses which, with their horizontally laid walls and sloping roofs, presented a picture of stability and relative comfort superior to that of most Indian habitations.

Each village was practically an independent political unit. Neighbouring settlements had many common interests which drew them into contact with one another, but there was no organized cohesion between the towns of the Bella Coola valley, or between those of *Tal'io* and Kimsquit. There was still less to draw these three groups together. There was no supreme chief and no governmental meeting of the tribe as a whole. Not only were the three divisions not bound to support one another in war, they were often at loggerheads among themselves. Indeed, bloodshed between towns of the Bella Coola valley itself was not uncommon. Moreover, each group tended to merge with its neighbours. The *Tal'io* people frequently married with the Rivers Inlet and the Bella Bella; the Kimsquit with the *xaisxaix*[a] of Dean Channel and the Kitlope of Gardner Canal; and the Bella Coola of the upper valley with the Carriers.

In spite of these inconsistencies, the application of the word *tribe* is justifiable for the following reasons:

A. Language. All spoke the same language. There were dialectical differences among the people of Bella Coola, *Tal'io*, and Kimsquit, but each group could understand the

[a] To avoid unnecessary symbols, capital x has not been used.

tribes. This differentiated them clearly from all neighbouring tribes.

B. CEREMONIES. A member of a secret society in any of the above towns was accepted as a member in any other one. A person of another tribe, even if known to belong to a comparable society, was treated as an uninitiated person.

C. OWNERS AND RECEIVERS. The people of Bella Coola, Tallio, and Kimsquit felt themselves to be akin through acceptance of the fact that their ancestors had been created together in the beginning of time. This marked them off with great clearness from all other tribes, especially from the Carriers of the interior. This belief formed a sentimental and religious bond of great strength.

## NEIGHBOURING TRIBES

It is desirable to describe, briefly, the tribes with which the Bella Coola came in contact.

### THE CARRIERS

East of Bella Coola, amid the mountains of the interior, dwelt the Carriers. In summer they often came down to the river valley to fish or trade for salmon, and in winter they were sometimes forced by cold and starvation again to visit the Bella Coola, Bella Bella, or Rivers Inlet people. There was a good deal of intermarriage between them and the inhabitants of the upper valley, so that the woodsmen were able to speak the coast tongue with relatives. Down the line, the Bella Coola considered these people utterly foreign in habits and beliefs, and to call a man a "Carrier" was, and still is, a deadly insult. The Carriers lacked the rich ceremonial life of the coastal peoples who, therefore, regarded them with scorn and contempt. The presence of a few of the much-despised Carriers was, however, almost necessary to the correct performance of the winter dances since they were uninitiated spectators whom it was necessary to impress and delude.

### THE BOLLA BOLLA

West of Bulla Coola lived the Bulla Bulla, known as *Quallaway*. Although linguistic differences prevented free exchange of ideas, and active hostility was not unknown, there was considerable intermarriage between the two tribes. The Bulla Coola recognized the similarity of culture between them; in fact, whereas a Copter was despised for lack of knowledge of ceremonial and domestic customs, a Bulla Bulla was respected for his superior lore in that respect. The Bulla Coola believe that many of their rites have been obtained from them.

The chief Bulla Bulla villages are said to have been: *Kwatna*, on "Kwatna" Bay; *Nil'wan*, on "Dean"; *Quiyut*, four miles from the last-mentioned; *Klaklan*.

At *Kwatna*, the largest settlement, so many of the people spoke Bulla Coola that it was practically bilingual. There had been so many intermarriages for generations that the people were not considered foreigners, in fact, Boas includes it among Bulla Coola villages (p. 48). There were seven villages on Kwatna Inlet and the Kwatna River which flows in from the south-east.

(c) *Kwakkanti*, "Where It Spoke"; a small outpost on the eastern shore of Kwatna Inlet near the entrance. There may once have been a permanent settlement on the site, but for many years it was used only as a look-out station when soldiers were expected.

It is said that on one occasion, long, long ago, a party of Kwatna people was encamped at this spot, waiting for enemy soldiers whose approach had been reported. They did not appear when expected and one of the members, wearied by the long wait, said to the guided vapors of one of the female companions who had accepted him:

"Tell us what is going to happen."

"You will all be killed to-morrow," answered a rumbling voice from the vapors, to the great consternation of everybody.

So it transpired. The hostile soldiers surprised the enemies the next day and only one escaped to tell the tale.

The ghost has since been known as, "Where It Spoke." It was long ago deserted.

## [illegible] AND [illegible]

### [illegible] *otóng*

Before the smallpox epidemic, about 1883, there were seven or eight villages of Dane Channel between Kinaquis and Bella Bella. The inhabitants were called *otóng* by the Bella Coola, and *awúq* by the Bella Bella. Their settlements were on Elcho Harbour, Green River, Cascade Inlet, and on several unidentified places. Their language is said to have differed slightly from that of the Bella Bella, but the people themselves mingled freely with both Kinaquis and Bella Bella, thus forming a connecting link between these tribes.

A list of *otóng* names was obtained from one old man, who claimed to be a descendant of the people. It was impossible to verify this information, and since he himself was not an ideal informant, the following can be regarded only as approximately correct.

(1) *Alko* on Elcho Harbour.

(2) *Kalk-o* on a bend one mile above the last-named.

(3) *Alkid* on Tagheo on a river three miles above the preceding.

(4) *Tsemsid-o* on a river two miles above the preceding.

(5) *Tsequell* on a bend three miles above the preceding.

(6) *Qualkas* on a bend three miles above the preceding.

(7) *Samalk* on a river two miles above the last-named and thirty miles below Kinaquis.

According to the old man from whom the above list was obtained, *Tsemsid*, on Kinaquis, counted earlier as village no. 5), was also populated by *otóng* people. There was so much intermarriage between the two groups that it is now impossible to ascertain whether the inhabitants not only of *Tsemsid*, but of *Samalk* as well, were predominantly Kinaquis or *otóng*.

The open plateau in which the Bella Coola River rises has always made travel possible for long distances, so that not only

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is a more obvious social grouping than the ancestral family, though it is of the latter that a man is most proud. The member of a small, unimportant village often describes himself as a native of a neighboring, larger one where at a distance from his home, simply as a matter of convenience.

Even before the coming of the white man, village sites were abandoned and people took up their residence with friends or relatives elsewhere. In fact, mythology contains instances of such migrations at the very beginning of time. In case of this kind, memory of the earlier home has been preserved for many generations, and may perhaps be the explanation of the many villages which are described as two, and which have two names. In the early days immigrants seem always to have been welcomed, they added to the numerical strength of the village, and the original inhabitants enjoyed boasting to the newcomers of their descent from the first settlers. Since any group forced to abandon their own homes naturally moved to those of relatives, there is no difficulty in understanding the process by which they continued to intermarry with their new neighbors. Thus two, or even more ancestral families, inhabiting one village tended to form a closely inter-related stock. In rare instances, two unrelated ancestral families may have become inhabitants of the same village, which would unquestionably lead to intermarriage.

In most cases the endogamic tendencies already described were the village community to be largely members of one ancestral family. In addition there are always other newcomers, strangers who have fled from their homes and sought refuge among the Bella Coola; the offspring of illicit intercourse with slaves; guests; foreigners, especially Carriers temporarily resident in Bella Coola; and finally slaves, without status in the community. The real inhabitants, those whose power is firmly planted in the village, are the reputed descendants of the first group of settlers, and accordingly a relative coming to [illegible] in a village usually endeavours to obtain a name from the origin myth of the ancestral family occupying it, and thus

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with a number of the large cone-shaped whistles used for sacred ceremonial. Towards dawn, sounds come from them, and sometimes a dull thump is heard on the roof, as if a heavy being had landed there. At once there is great excitement within the house. The voices of supernatural people prove them to be at hand. No one is allowed to leave except a sacred elder[1] who is skilled in dealing with *Malahida*,[2] also called *Bacinginemun*, the supernatural being closely connected with the sacred ritual. Those within can hear the voice of the elder raised as if he were speaking to someone at a distance.

"Chief, you have come too early," he says. "The house is not yet ready. Please return later."

He is answered by loud whistling, which grows fainter, as if the being who made it were moving away. In reality the young men are merely blowing less forcibly into the whistles.

[1] The accounts of all informants agree that much of the sacred ritual was orally imparted into Bella Coola from Bella Bella. According to some statements, Palaka, a Bella Coola chief who died between 1870 and 1880, married a Bella Bella wife, who was from Rivers Inlet, and it was these two women who brought with them to Bella Coola certain sacred prerogatives. It is said that previous to this time the Bella Coola did not understand the use of the large cone-shaped whistles, nor were they able to announce the supernatural beings in the months included in the Gusk-winta, nor to depict the beings at the conclusion of the rites. On the other hand, some Bella Coola claim that their two ancestors brought the whistles with them from the land above. It is probable that the calling in of the supernatural beings is a recent addition to the potlatch, which accounts for the contradictory statements, but whether or not the whistles are a new feature is more doubtful. It appears certain that the prerogatives of *sûk* has recently been obtained from the Bella Bella. *Sûk* means "the one who sucks," and the name is given to the man whose prerogative it is to send the Secret Initiate to obtain supernatural powers (see footnote). In Bella Bella there is a similar functionary for Gusk-winta known as *a kut'alitlala*. Through intermarriage several Bella Coola have recently obtained this prerogative, in such case it is locally stated that it has been derived from the Bella Bella. The Bella Coola apply to them, as forerunner, the term *sûk*, as they do for the Secret "sucker," though the Bella Bella name, *kut'alitlala*, is used with equal frequency. The present *sûk* have endeavored to claim for themselves certain ceremonial functions formerly carried out by one *sûk*. In this account of a potlatch it is assumed that a *sûk* is functioning on all occasions, but in many cases one spoke could in conference collectively claim to the supernatural beings to are accidentally. Until about 1870 it is also that any *sûk* was regarded as capable of doing so.

[2] Knowledge of this being is said to have been acquired by the marriage of a certain chieftain of Kimsquit to a Bella Bella woman in the beginning of time.

585 covering" or "rope fastening" for her. Within a few days or weeks, they must invite their fellow-villagers to a ceremony of some kind. If it is winter this can be a sound dance, but in summer it must be a non-sacred affair. Y's father and other relatives attend, furnished with the usual gifts. When the ceremony is over and the time has come for the distribution of presents, a herald calls out that X has no coat. If he has already been established in one he calls out that it is not fine." Y at once brings forward some of the goods provided by her relatives, and places them with the goods which X's family received at the wedding and are about to give away. The whole is then divided among the guests, together with presents provided by X for Y's relatives. The actual purpose of the rite may be to obtain names for some of X's young relatives or to establish aunts for them: it is immaterial to Y's people to what end they are applied. Within recent years this has sometimes taken place at a *Secret* dance, but such overlapping between the two types of ceremonial is probably an innovation due to decay.

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197 585 Since 1910 an effort was made to introduce a marriage custom of the Kwakiutl. According to the Bella Coola, among them the wife given to her husband's relatives one or more boards studded with teeth of the sea-otter. This makes teeth for the bride, so that if she ever quarrels with another woman she can draw back her lips and shame her rival by saying:

"What can you do? You have no teeth, while I have two sets," or as many boards as have been given at her marriage.

[583] The grandson of a Port Rupert Kwakiutl, living in Bella Coola and considered a member of the tribe, owned one of these boards and used it at the marriage of his daughter in 1912. It was first given to the mother of the bridegroom, and experimented with a copper; then given to the bridegroom, and ceremonially finally given, and again experimented, from the father of the groom. The woman for whom this was done can

The preferred way for the establishment is having a potlatch and the usual ceremonial with a few dances (see Boas-Hunt. Kwak. p. 407).

# THE NSAA CREEK DICTIONARY

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**[ ]** interrogative, "Come and eat"; Invitation to the indicator to assemble in a performer's house.

**[ ]** noun, "Chief Turtle"

**[ ]** verb, phr. "Messenger hearing invitation to a gathering."

**[ ]** definition: "Message."

**[ ]** adjectival: 1. = "Property, regarded as clothing, etc., given by the groom's relatives to the bride's relatives when the latter visit the latter on the wedding day."

**[ ]** 2. = "Other presents given by the husband's relatives to the wife's relatives prior to the ceremony."

**[ ]** transitive, "The Throwing Off of a Heavy Burden from the Shoulders"; Sort of the impression by a wife's relatives of presents received from her husband's relatives.

**[ ]** transitive: 1. = "Belonging unto."

2. = "The destruction of the house of a chief who is about to give a gathering."

**[ ]** subjective: "One of the names of the supreme god."

**[ ]** combination: "Predestined, by greatness on the field, as a chief to go to the meeting place."

**[ ]** substitute: "The employment of hospital work hunting."

**[ ]** **[ ]** high noun: "Chief or Small Mammal Hole."

**[ ]** interjectional: "The Chasing"; Synonym for chasing, q.v.; this is a "Creepish hole only."

**[ ]** a phrase: "A house site in which the performer appears on the hours or death."

**[ ]** a sentence: "The casting of buried bodies on the fire."

**[ ]** **[ ]** adverb: "Far from the River"; Village on the upper Ecunapela River.

**[ ]** **[ ]** **[ ]** **